

# More sunken billions? Accountability in fisheries aid to Africa

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August, 2014.

**CFFA Working Paper: For comments only, not for citation**  
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## Abstract

*The Coalition for Fair Fisheries has compiled a database on aid to the fisheries sector in Sub-Saharan Africa. The database is incomplete, but it contains over 3,300 projects, dating back to the 1970s, totalling over 9 billion USD. The data is summarised, showing which countries receive the most, who are the largest source of fisheries aid, and what have the trends been over the past few decades. In this paper CFFA sets out why aid to the fisheries sector is a matter of concern in the management of fisheries, including the relationship between fisheries aid and industrial fisheries, foreign access agreements, democratic governance and the livelihoods of small-scale fisheries. The report highlights the very low levels of transparency and accountability in aid projects, and the problems that exist with donor instigated partnerships, project evaluations and civil society oversight. The report concludes with some ideas for taking forward necessary debates on improving the accountability of fisheries aid, including improving access to information, deepening the evaluation of aid, and strengthening democratic accountability through citizen engagement.*

## 1. Introduction

The need to mobilize more aid for reforming or saving fisheries is routinely recommending by those working in the public and NGO sector. For example, the World Bank launched the Global Partnership for Oceans (GPO) in 2013. The initial press releases suggested the GPO will amass 1.5 billion dollars over five years to help finance projects that host countries will identify with the support of donors, academia, NGOs and the private sector.<sup>1</sup>

Considerable funding is thought essential in developing countries, whose fisheries management is often lacking resources and expertise. Yet, as will be shown, the fisheries sector in many African countries has received significant foreign aid for decades, and the ability to manage fisheries, particularly industrial fisheries, is contingent on development assistance.

According to some donors their efforts in the fisheries sector have been successful. On announcing a 11 million Euro grant to the African Union to take forward the African Partnership for Fisheries, a project established with a 15 million GBP grant from the UK, Ms Lowri Evans (head of DG-MARE at the European Commission) told African Ministers that since 2007 the EU has provided 126 million Euros for fisheries development in Africa and that has “significantly improved the sustainability of resources”.<sup>2</sup> Yet what is the evidence for this claim and is it true that the contribution of the EU to Africa’s fisheries can be described as improving sustainability?

In contrast to the speech by Lowri Evans is a paper commissioned by the World Bank on the political economy of fisheries aid in Africa (Cunningham & Neiland: 2010), subsequently republished by the same project the EU is funding, the Partnership for African Fisheries (Anon: 2011). This provided a negative assessment, arguing that the legacy of aid to Africa’s fisheries was dismal and that “there are clear signs that the sector is in a weak and vulnerable condition in most countries, characterised by declining catches and incomes, high levels of over-exploitation and associated weak management”. Development agencies were criticised for not having a coherent approach to fisheries work due to a lack of theoretical framing, and in particular the failure of development planners to consider the economics of unsustainable fishing. This assessment argued for the wealth-based approach to fisheries reform, which stresses the importance of increasing government rents from fisheries, which in turn requires a focus on implementing specific institutions of property rights and ending open access in fisheries management. The problem with aid is that donors had not been listening to fisheries economists.

Following on from the World Bank paper, the aim of this paper is to encourage more scrutiny on aid in fisheries. The first part summarises data on fisheries aid to Sub-Saharan countries based on a new database compiled by the Coalition for Fair Fisheries Arrangements. The database is incomplete, but provides an overview of some broad trends, giving an insight into the scale of development aid, which countries receive the most and who are the most generous aid agencies. The second part highlights some key reasons why aid should be considered a matter of concern, including its role in supporting industrial fisheries, its potential corrosive impact on fisheries governance and its ambiguous implications for small-scale fisheries. The intention here is not to suggest aid is simply negative and thereby play into popular arguments that it should be done away with; we merely wish to establish that some areas of aid to the fisheries sector raise important concerns.

Rather than comment on theoretical debates about what aid should or should not be doing (and whether a wealth-based approach is really the answer), the third part focuses on the problem of how aid is done. The paper draws attention to the dire levels of transparency and accountability that characterises many aid projects and donor initiatives, including recent fisheries partnerships. The conclusion identifies some ideas for how accountability in aid could be strengthened.

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<sup>1</sup> See the GPO website: <http://www.globalpartnershipforoceans.org/>

<sup>2</sup> Speech by Lowri Evans at the CAMFA Meeting, Ministerial Dialogue on Fisheries and Aquaculture, Addis Ababa, 30 April 2014, downloaded from: [http://ec.europa.eu/information\\_society/newsroom/cf/mare/itemdetail.cfm?item\\_id=16233](http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/newsroom/cf/mare/itemdetail.cfm?item_id=16233)

## 2. Trends in ODA to fisheries in Africa.

In the 1980s the FAO reported that between 1974 and 1985 there were at least 1600 aid projects launched in the fisheries sector worldwide, and the value of these grew from 130 million USD in 1974 to nearly 500 million in 1985 (Jouspiet: 1987). About a fifth of this funding was destined to Africa, meaning new fisheries projects for the continent in 1985 had combined budgets of 130 million USD. The World Bank's Profish project later estimated that between 1973 and 2001, the value of all fisheries aid projects in Africa (when adjusted to 2001 dollar values) amounted to 4.6 billion USD (Cunningham & Neiland: 2010).

More up to date information has been compiled by the Coalition for Fair Fisheries Arrangements, through a new fisheries aid database. This draws largely from information published by the OECD, through their International Development Statistics database. Since the mid 1990s members of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC), now comprising 29 countries, have agreed to report on an annual basis commitments and disbursements since the late 1990s, although data on the OECD aid database predates this time for some donors. Various non-DAC members and multilateral organisations have shared information on their projects voluntarily with the OECD as well. The OECD database codes projects according to their purpose, which includes fisheries as a distinct category. In addition to the OECD data is the information compiled by the Aiddata project, although this is largely consistent with information from OECD. CFFA have made further adjustments to the OECD data, by including some missing projects and identifying projects that were coded under different purpose headings, most often under environmental projects, but had obvious focus on fisheries management and small-scale fisheries.

At the time of writing, the CFFA database contains information on 3,371 separate projects for Sub-Saharan Africa up to the year 2012, although the database is evolving and more information is added when it is available. The total declared budgets of these projects is 6,017,051,504 USD, which represents the value of the projects when they were started. To understand the relative worth of aid flows over time, the OECD has developed an equation referred to as the DAC deflator. Using this method and choosing the USD value for 2011 as the constant, the total value of aid projects in the database is 9,880,342,634 USD.

The resulting data needs to be treated cautiously. The primary objective in compiling this database is to improve information on the activities of donors and on their specific projects. In this way, the database could be used as a tool for achieving improved accountability and debates on aid at the national and regional level. As a tool to understand the amount of aid going to fisheries related projects it has several limitations, which are summarised below. Based on the data we do have, we can provide some snap shots of trends in aid to the fisheries sector, and these could be explored more fully with additional research and access to information. Here we focus on three aspects – where is money going, who is providing it, and has there been an increase in aid flows overtime.

Table 1 provides a summary of the total flow of aid spending to countries, as well as aid projects that have regional or continental scope. Of the top five country recipients when looking at the nominal amount, Mozambique comes in first position, followed by Mauritania, Senegal, Angola and then Ghana. Using the adjusted amount derived from the DAC deflator, the picture is slightly different, and Senegal is the top recipient and Uganda makes the top five. There are countries that have a much larger difference between nominal amounts and adjusted amounts, because they were important recipients of aid historically, but less so more recently. Angola and Somalia are illustrative as these two countries were once the recipients of some of the largest aid projects for fisheries, but in the last decade or so have received very little, possibly reflecting growing instability in these countries and changing priorities of donors with the ending of the Cold War. From Table 1 we also see that regional and international projects on Africa's fisheries are sizeable, and further analysis of the data suggests that donors are attaching more importance, and therefore funding, to regional projects than national and sub-national ones.

*Table 1: Total value of aid projects by recipient country or region (in USD).*

Country/Region	Original Amount	Adjusted (2011)
Mozambique	400,533,192	635,806,432
Mauritania	393,072,063	616,035,844
Senegal	355,595,328	653,330,696
Angola	299,656,691	574,372,949
Ghana	249,662,118	340,218,432
Tanzania	224,624,647	414,667,090
Nigeria	205,530,961	476,302,369
Guinea	191,778,562	336,599,791
Mali	184,888,210	237,996,337
Uganda	184,674,066	354,530,442
Madagascar	155,650,023	245,862,505
Somalia	147,029,881	345,465,496
Cape Verde	139,667,563	200,404,761
Namibia	131,607,364	197,009,109
Kenya	107,231,030	171,208,285
Guinea Bissau	106,462,071	147,743,606
Seychelles	105,344,192	179,712,017
Burkina Faso	102,438,024	142,535,178
Gabon	97,652,222	137,476,254
Malawi	92,714,339	189,732,434
Gambia	88,467,293	163,733,233
Mauritius	82,753,130	134,118,752
Benin	80,736,576	120,463,677
Sierra Leone	71,848,434	128,810,958
Cameroon	64,908,708	159,894,738
Cote d'Ivoire	64,171,074	114,344,336
Niger	60,860,535	85,617,632
Djibouti	59,786,094	99,848,301
Eritrea	51,675,568	66,806,464
DRC	49,150,136	68,500,913
Sao Tome and Principe	48,466,087	76,092,120
Republic of Congo	44,331,785	59,836,422
Sudan	44,266,435	72,686,554
Zambia	33,415,998	89,052,597

Rwanda	33,303,938	50,213,965
Chad	31,864,057	38,022,954
Comoros	28,426,391	52,046,800
South Africa	24,783,701	36,491,654
Equatorial Guinea	24,249,808	43,156,869
Zimbabwe	18,932,152	26,254,670
Mayotte	17,822,372	26,996,940
Burundi	17,458,599	40,387,788
Ethiopia	11,630,884	24,101,917
Togo	10,649,729	12,122,613
CAR	7,620,942	15,111,855
Liberia	6,153,941	6,290,471
St Helena	3,504,030	4,828,408
Regional project/international projects	639,414,433	875,592,725

In terms of the main providers of ODA, table 2 shows that the World Bank comes out on top, followed by the African Development Bank Group. Japan is the largest source of ODA for fisheries among the bi-lateral donors, far outspending others.

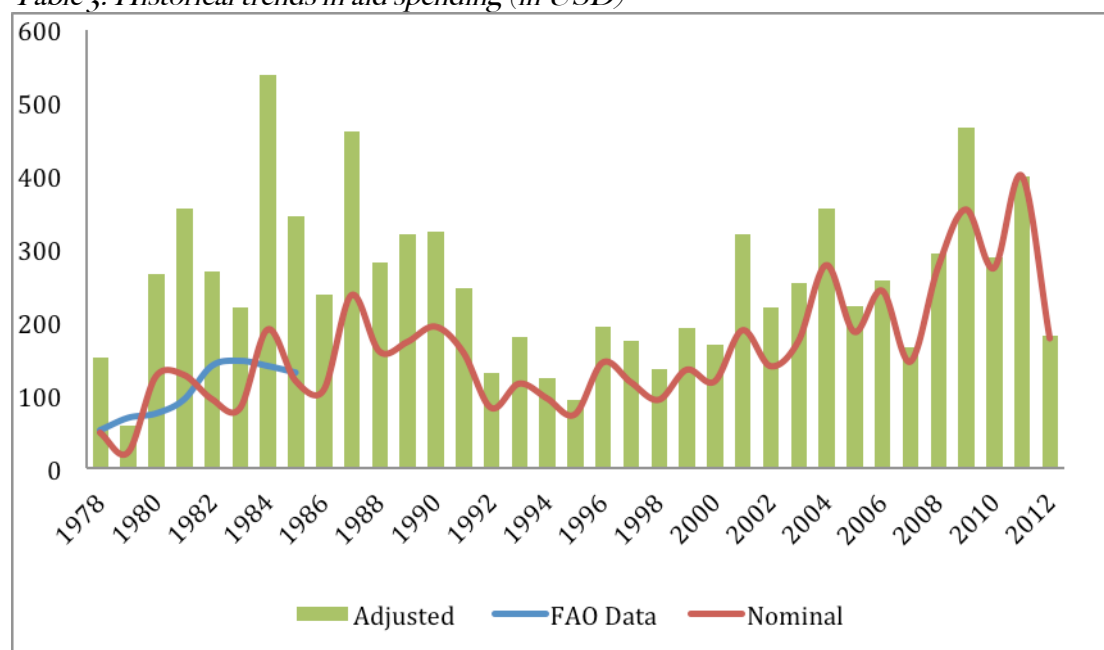
The CFFA database can also be used to indicate historical trends in ODA for fisheries among those contributing to the OECD database. The result, showed in table 3, suggests that despite annual fluctuations, the fisheries sector in sub-Saharan Africa received more development assistance during the 1980s compared to the 1990s, and then throughout the 2000s aid flows have gradually increased, catching up with levels found in the 1980s.

*Table 2: Total value of projects by Donor agency (in USD)*

Donor	Original Amount	Adjusted (2011)
World Bank	1,148,007,084	2,024,622,459
AFDB Group	901,428,447	1,435,774,979
Japan	821,154,584	1,162,662,307
EU	400,946,877	600,380,723
GEF	367,562,226	397,967,669
International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)	305,148,187	493,792,692
Sweden	265,001,107	481,161,556
Italy	225,868,740	455,710,163
Norway	225,080,609	560,669,947
France	224,481,221	419,256,400
Arab Bank for international development	155,883,865	308,374,951
Spain	136,615,406	173,311,814
Canada	125,504,153	299,236,804

Germany	96,972,174	140,568,141
Netherlands	72,138,802	145,015,061
OPEC Fund for International Development (OFID)	71,138,000	97,647,650
United Kingdom	59,324,828	60,281,308
United States	52,623,061	73,092,938
Kuwait	47,806,693	113,618,380
Denmark	43,994,657	90,990,939
Islamic Development Bank (ISDB)	42,312,569	62,206,963
Finland	37,794,289	41,913,373
Belgium	37,283,318	47,123,801
United Arab Emirates	35,202,491	55,488,510
Iceland	32,832,130	37,100,617
Taiwan	24,710,032	32,266,856
Ireland	7,373,164	7,519,803
Korea	6,157,693	6,470,692
Saudi Arabia	5,347,189	9,810,109
Portugal	1,310,305	2,044,812

Table 3: Historical trends in aid spending (in USD)



### 2.1. Limitations to the CFFA database

Several caveats need to be mentioned in using the data from the CFFA database to understand trends in aid flows.

A straightforward difficulty is that not all donors report information on what money was actually spent for projects, providing information only on the committed amount. There can be a considerable discrepancy between project commitments and project disbursements, and the discrepancy goes in both directions. We have more complete data on project commitments than project disbursements, so this figure has been used to estimate total amounts of ODA, when the reality may in fact be quite different.

A second challenge is that funding for fisheries work is often provided through multi-purpose projects, particularly those that cover agriculture and the environment. It is difficult to find information on what proportion of these projects was spent on fisheries, although a failure to do so distorts knowledge on total fisheries aid considerably. Some effort has been made in compiling the CFFA database to include estimates on what proportion of funding in multi-purpose projects went to fisheries, or to exclude multi purpose projects when the proportion spent on fisheries was likely to be minimal, although much more effort and access to project budgets would be needed to resolve this dilemma satisfactorily. This challenge becomes even more complex when we factor in the practice of donors providing general budget support to governments, which will in turn be used to help finance the budgets of fisheries departments.

Perhaps the most important limitation lies with the incomplete coverage of the database. There are several factors to consider. Historical reporting by DAC countries has been inconsistent, although compliance with OECD requirements has improved over the past decade or so. There are still inconsistencies among those who report data to the OECD, and this highlights grey areas of what is defined as aid and what is not. For example, it is rare to hear payments by the European Commission for fisheries access agreements in Africa to be referred to as development aid, with most discussions on these agreements presuming they are strictly commercial. Yet the EC has reported some, but not all, fund transfers under FPAs as ODA to the OECD, particularly the payments that are specifically used for supporting fisheries management in host countries, which are distinguished from the money to host countries that they can use discretionally. The EC has confirmed with the author that there has been a problem with its reporting, and all money paid through FPAs for fisheries management support should be categorised as ODA, although why the remainder of the money paid for fisheries access is not, remains ambiguous. We do not know if there are similar confusions stemming from funds used by other fishing nations as part of fisheries access agreements that are either considered aid or commercial payments, and this becomes murky as public funds used to support fisheries projects can be channelled through industry associations and may appear as subsidies in the donor country.

Beyond the data that is reported by DAC countries, information is sparse. There are no projects in the CFFA database for Russia and China. Far more research is needed to get access to this information.

To arrive at a complete understanding on how much foreign aid goes to fisheries development in Africa, one has to consider donor funding for and by various non-state organisations, including UN agencies who work on fisheries, including FAO, UNEP, IFAD and UNDP. Understanding the contribution of these UN agencies to fisheries development is hard, because the UN agencies are both recipients of project funds, and sources of funding for specific fisheries projects. UN agencies are also not as transparent as some other multilateral donors or bi-lateral agencies (Easterly & Williamson: 2010), so research on international aid has often struggled to get a clear picture on their budgets and spending. The CFFA database offers only a partial view on the amount of funds spent by these agencies in supporting fisheries work in Africa.

Alongside the UN agencies are development funds for NGOs working on fisheries and marine conservation, as well as international NGOs (INGOs) with work programmes on Africa. Information on the budgets NGOs working on fisheries has not been attempted for the CFFA database, although it would significantly add to the overall picture on aid flows. Similarly, private funds for development has also grown substantially over the past few decades, and private funders in the US provide donations of the same magnitude as US government overseas development aid (Kapur & Whittle: 2010). In fisheries, we can identify organisations such as the PEW Charitable trust as being sources of this philanthropic funding, and their influence on fisheries policy has grown substantially

over the past few years. Indeed, the importance of non-government funding for overseas development has grown with the preference by bi-lateral and multi-lateral donors for 'public-private' initiatives where traditional ODA is matched or joined by funds from corporations. With a global shift towards government austerity, there is hope (and fear among others) that 'socially responsible investing' by corporations can fill a void. In the EU this is referred to as 'blended aid', and has grown from only 15 million Euros in 2007 to 490 million in 2012 (Eurodad: 2013). This is also identified by the GPO and other NGOs including WWF as being an attractive modality for raising funding for the fisheries sector (Rangeley & Davies: 2012). But there is very limited publically available information on these private aid flows and rules regulating them are yet to be developed (Lawson: 2013).

In summary, although the CFFA database provides a useful entry point into understanding aid flows to Africa's fisheries there is a lot more that needs to be done to gain a more complete and reliable picture.

### **3. Are there reasons to be concerned about the impact of fisheries aid?**

Although we lack precise data on its scale, and there are some aid flows on which we know very little, the results of the CFFA database suggest aid is an important consideration in understanding the fisheries sector. We may ask whether the amount of aid is sufficient and whether developed countries should be spending more to assist African countries in managing fisheries, although equally there are pressing questions about the impact of all these aid projects.

The World Bank's study represents the only recent attempt to offer a broad assessment on the legacy of aid to Africa's fisheries. Its conclusion that aid has been ineffective is worrying, although not entirely convincing either. For one reason, impacts of aid projects are often obscure, they may take a long time to understand well, and the impacts may be distributed unevenly, with both winners and losers. The net impact may be extremely difficult to agree on. Furthermore, any effort to generalise about the impact of aid faces the difficulty of disentangling its role from other more potentially significant factors and events, such as trade policies, access agreements and the role of subsidies (Hersoug, Jentoff & Degnbol, 2004). Thus, the expectations placed on development aid to solve problems such as unsustainable fishing, worsening food security and economic insecurity in the fisheries sector may be exaggerated, and part of the problem lies with donors themselves who justify projects with inflated ideas about what they can realistically achieve. Several case studies illustrate that large donor projects fail because of events outside of their control. Consider for instance that in Mozambique, the recipient of one of the largest flows of aid to any one country in Africa for fisheries reform, the government launched its own tuna fishing company in 2013 by raising 850 million USD through European and Russian banks. This was not discussed among any of the development partners who have funded fisheries programmes in the country, and it has led to the main Western development agencies threatening to temporarily stop all aid to the country.<sup>3</sup> 850 million USD is about twice as much as Mozambique has received in aid projects for fisheries over the past five decades.

The study of aid is therefore complex and any attempt to generalise about its impact, even at the national or project level, is fraught with methodological and conceptual challenges. Nevertheless, there are areas where the role of aid in the fisheries sector does raise concern, and it is deserving of more critical review and reflection. We do not want to argue fisheries aid is simply bad, and that it needs to be done away with, rather the intention here is to highlight why it is important that aid is subject to more critical review. The following four interrelated themes are briefly described to illustrate this point.

#### **3.1 Aid dependency and industrial fisheries**

The growth in aid to the fisheries sector in Africa that began from the 1960s onwards was largely motivated by the need to raise productivity and introduce more efficient fishing and fish processing technologies. Increasing economic growth via raising exports was the overall objective. According to

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<sup>3</sup> For further information and links to media stories and articles on this, see: [http://transparentsea.co/index.php?title=Mozambique\\_Tuna\\_Company](http://transparentsea.co/index.php?title=Mozambique_Tuna_Company)

FAO's research in the mid 1980s, the majority of aid projects they reviewed involved transfer of funds to buy modern fishing vessels, fund joint ventures between donor country firms and local business, and establish the infrastructure for industrial fish processing and export (Jouspriet: 1987). It was an era that has been derided for causing overfishing and marginalising small-scale fisheries. For example, Baily wrote in 1988 in his study on development aid to West Africa that foreign donors had established a dualistic pattern of development, with benefits "skewed towards a limited number of large-scale fishing enterprises rather than towards the far more numerous small-scale subsector" (Baily: 1998, p. 43). Yet the legacy of this era of modernizing fishing and trying to indigenize industrial fisheries was also prone to remarkable failures. Gibbs writing about this gives the example of Mauritania that received a 10 million USD loan by France to establish a fishing company and fish-processing factory in 1965. The Societe Mauritanienne de l'Armamenta la Pech was bankrupt only four years later, the company sold all of its 13 vessels and by the early 1980s Mauritania still had no nationally owned fishing vessel (Gibbs: 1984).

The era of large investments intended to support the growth of industrial marine and lake fisheries may have phased out, although subsidies for fishing firms in industrialised countries continue to have the same effect and highlight the problem of policy in-coherence. Still, there are more recent sizeable investments in commercial fishery production, particularly in aquaculture and port development. In Madagascar, for instance, by the mid 2000s World Bank and EU loans for the development of commercial shrimp farming reached well over 15 million USD. The largest beneficiaries of this support were multinational companies based in Europe, although at least one has now been taken over by a Chinese company.<sup>4</sup>

Perhaps more important now than capital intensive projects designed to boost commercial production are the large number of aid projects that support industrial fisheries management, including through funding research, management capacity building and the costs of trying to control fishing vessels and combat illegalities. Industrial fishing is still a major focus for aid spending, although its contribution to development remains uncertain in many places, with a highly variable impact on local fisheries, food supply and economic growth (Kurien 2004). Some very large donor funded activities for improving the management of industrial fisheries also continue to raise questions about value for money and sustainability. Norway has helped Mozambique acquire a former fishing vessel to act as a patrol vessel to curb illegal fishing, and the annual cost of running the vessel is 6 million USD, which compares to annual state income from foreign fishing agreements and licenses of about 2 million USD. A mid point evaluation of Norway's funding for Mozambique fisheries questioned whether this arrangement was sustainable and what would happen to the patrol vessel if Norway's funding ended (NORAD: 2013). Indeed, over the past decade a considerable amount of funding and international focus has been directed towards improving law enforcement capacity in Africa's fisheries, but there is no evidence to show that this is having a positive result and there is lack of clarity on exactly what the objectives are and how success could be measured beyond the occasional highly publicised arrest. The untended effects of building law enforcement capacity in countries that struggle to respect basic human rights also needs to be given careful consideration, a point seemingly overlooked in the fervour to fight what is now commonly referred to as 'pirate fishing'.

Whether managing the various costs of industrial fishing is a good use of limited donor funds is a matter for further reflection. The fishing industry itself could pay more and in this way development funds can be thought of as further subsidies to the sector. Moreover, despite the objective presented by some donors that their work in fisheries should enable host countries to be self-financing, the costs of industrial fisheries management may always require extensive donor assistance for some countries, because it cannot be taxed at a sufficient rate. This situation is one of 'aid dependence', and it is an overlooked aspect to current efforts to promote a wealth-based approach to fisheries reform. How much development aid is needed to enable African states to increase rents from fisheries to the point they are self-sustaining, and how will debt from development loans be financed?

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<sup>4</sup> For information on shrimp fisheries in Madagascar see, [http://transparentsea.co/index.php?title=Madagascar:Shrimp\\_farming](http://transparentsea.co/index.php?title=Madagascar:Shrimp_farming)

Furthermore, development aid might be working as a disincentive to host governments to shoulder more of the costs of managing fisheries.

### **3.2 *The (ab)use of aid by fisheries nations.***

A great deal of research has shed light onto the way in which some donors ensure that aid benefits their political agenda and national firms. Development aid can be less altruistic than it is strategic. A straightforward complaint is that a large portion of aid money destined for development ends up being paid to firms from the donor country. This happens either through tied aid, where recipients are obliged to use donor country firms for goods and services, or more informally even where competitive procedures are in place to win contracts. At least 20% of ODA from DAC countries is formally tied aid, and 60% is informally tied aid (Clay, Geddes & Natalie: 2009). This is known as “boomerang aid”. But there are more insidious problems in the fisheries sector related to the how fisheries aid projects may support trade and fishing activities of the donor’s industry.

Of the DAC countries, the main ‘distant water fishing fleets’ are represented by European companies from Spain, France, Italy and Portugal, who are engaged in long-line and purse seine fishing for tuna and migratory species, trawling for demersal fish, shrimps and also shrimp farming, and then also the Netherlands, Ireland and Germany whose firms are engaged in trawling for small-pelagics off West Africa. Asian distant water fishing fleets represented among DAC countries is dominated by Japan. The distant water fishing fleets on which we have very limited insight about their aid spending includes China and Russia. Both countries have been prominent in fisheries in Africa for decades and are reported to be increasing investments and fishing agreements.

The data on aid projects shows that fishing nations provide relatively more aid than non-fishing nations, and that fisheries is less important for donors that are not involved in the fisheries sector. The world’s largest bi-lateral donor is the US, but it ranks quite low in terms of bi-lateral donors for Africa’s fisheries, whereas Japan is by far the largest fisheries donor on the African continent. Likewise Spain spends more on aid to the fisheries sector than the UK, although Spain is a much smaller donor for Africa. This does not necessarily tell us aid is being used strategically by the fishing nations. It may simply be that donor countries favour projects that relate to their specific expertise.

Still, a valid question is how does aid from countries such as Japan, Spain, or from the EU, influence fisheries relations, and more specifically access arrangements for their fishing firms? This issue has been better studied in the Pacific Island states as they are heavily reliant on foreign aid at the same time as having extremely valuable tuna fisheries, dominated by firms from ‘development partners’. Campling and Havice (2010) describe that in the Pacific Island states donor’s explanations for problems in fisheries management have tended to focus on the inadequacies of national governance, distracting from the various strategies distant water fishing nations and their firms use to influence policy decisions. The use and abuse of aid is one part of this story. Japan, for example, is understood to condition broader aid programmes on fishing access for its fleets.

The same problems are reported in Africa. One review of access arrangements in Africa stated with confidence that most distant water fishing nations make aid payments conditional on fisheries access (Mfodwo: 2008), and components of fisheries access payments and grants from donors may be used to reward officials during the negotiation process (Standing: 2008). There are also reports that development grants to fisheries agencies in 2012 played a role in the controversial decision by some nations of West Africa to grant access to Russian firms fishing for small-pelagics (CFFA: 2011). Likewise, in Namibia, a report by the international consortium for investigative journalists described that funds provided by the Spanish Cooperation Office have been used to lobby the Namibian government to promote Spanish fishing interests, possibly protecting Spanish firms from greater foreign competition (Rey & Grobblers: 2011).

The relationship between aid and fisheries management may go beyond the negotiation of access agreements. Japan has been accused of using aid to gain support for decisions in international forums, including on regulating whaling and tuna fishing (Adam: 2009). This type of behaviour may also be evident in the decisions of some Regional Fisheries Management Organisations, although it is not a subject that has been well researched. Finally, aid programmes in countries may also influence

how host nations apply regulations to foreign fishing firms, with firms from prominent donor countries receiving more lenient treatment than others. One may question, for example, the impartial application of monitoring and control of fishing vessels where donors from fishing nations fund fisheries departments or donate patrol vessels to the host country, as is the case in Ghana, where China has recently donated four.<sup>5</sup> The company supplying the vessels to Ghana is also a subsidiary of a group of companies including one that entered into a long-term fisheries agreement in Mauritania in 2012 worth a 100 million USD.<sup>6</sup> Such cases alert to the possibility that while donors supply aid, the net benefits in relationships between the donor and host country may be skewed, and aid is functioning more as an investment than it is as a mechanism to address human development. As such it should not be considered aid at all.

### 3.3. Aid, corruption & democratic accountability in fisheries

Several studies have concluded that high levels of aid can contribute to worsening government accountability, increased corruption and authoritarianism. By no means is the theory on aid dependence as a cause of corruption and mal-governance proven, and a range of competing ideas have been put forward, including those that describe aid has an 'amplification effect', worsening the situation in highly corrupt and authoritarian countries, and generally making things better in more democratic and less corrupt places (Dutta et al: 2012). However, the fact that many countries receiving significant foreign aid for fisheries work fall into the former category suggests this is an important area for further consideration.

The implications for development agencies posed by undemocratic governance and corruption has received quite limited attention in fisheries literature (Standing: 2008 and Moore: 2010). Corruption within fisheries aid projects is a straightforward concern, and it is likely to be a factor in understanding both limited outcomes, and inflated donor costs for fisheries projects as it is in many other sectors. But the question of whether aid is a cause of corruption and lack of accountability in areas of government responsibility, such as fisheries management, remains more worrying.

The theory of why this occurs is partly based on the fear that external funding from aid makes government officials less sensitive to the interests of citizens, in comparison to a situation where more of their income is derived from direct taxation. A constant flow of aid money to government agencies that have systematically failed to address their mandate to citizens also reinforces bad work ethics and cushions officials from more local criticisms, while aid itself becomes an easy locus of rent seeking and personal enrichment. A World Bank corruption specialist describes that "aid dependence can potentially undermine institutional quality, by weakening accountability, encouraging rent seeking and corruption, fomenting conflict over control of aid funds, siphoning off scarce talent from the bureaucracy, and alleviating pressure to reform inefficient policies and institutions" (Knack: 2001, p. 311).

Development agencies are accused by some of being complicit in these problems, because they are incentivised to increase aid spending and ensure host recipients are not subject to too much criticism, which would negatively impact on further aid spending (Cooksie: 2003). Hanlon, for example, has described that aid agencies knowingly turned a blind eye to corruption in Mozambique, including in the fisheries sector, because they were more concerned about consolidating aid funding after the civil war and ensuring support to economic liberalisation (Hanlon: 2004).

Case study research into corruption of aid projects in fisheries is few and far between. One exception was an expose written by a Norwegian in 2009 who was involved in managing a 60 million USD natural resources programme in Tanzania, which included funds for fisheries work and the establishment of marine protected areas (Jansen: 2009). Based on the findings of an external audit report (these are rare in development projects) he described that as much as half of Norway's funds

<sup>5</sup> See press release by the Ghana Ministry for Food and Agriculture, available at:

[http://transparentsea.co/images/b/bb/President\\_Commissions\\_New\\_patrol\\_boats\\_ghana.pdf](http://transparentsea.co/images/b/bb/President_Commissions_New_patrol_boats_ghana.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> For further information and links to media reports, see: [http://transparentsea.co/index.php?title=China#The\\_China\\_Poly\\_Group](http://transparentsea.co/index.php?title=China#The_China_Poly_Group)

were mismanaged through various forms of embezzlement and fraud. Among the findings were that vehicles had been bought way above market value, payments were made to phantom consultants, many workshops were claimed for much longer than they had lasted for, and list of participants were inflated, employees were receiving per diems and travel allowance when on holiday. The report went on to criticise Norway for undermining government and NGO work, by contributing to an obsession for attending as many events as possible to claim allowances, which includes the problem of people turning up to several separate events in a day, or insisting meetings take place far from the office when a simple phone call would suffice. Somewhere between 50-70% of Norway's funding was directed to capacity building workshops and seminars. Because people rely on per diems for income, they will not speak critically of those in government who decide on who is invited to meetings. Jensen also described that national programme leaders of donor funds face pressure by other more senior government employees to divert funds to cover their expenses, for which there is limited public funding available.

This work reveals another potentially negative impact of aid on governance that is important to explore further, the corrupting influence it can have on civil society. Those critical of this influence point out that many NGOs have been created by development funds, and these in turn are made up predominantly by the privileged middle class, who in turn offer a conservative voice in political forums due to their political backgrounds and more importantly their dependency on further aid funding and the regular perks of per diems and international travel to conferences (Mercer: 2002). This may work against the engagement in decision-making by civic associations or citizens. These are concerns relevant to the fisheries sector, where donor funding has meant participation in decision making forums is often captured by a small number of NGOs that claim to represent the voice of beneficiaries, such as small-scale fisheries, but often have quite limited local legitimacy.

### *3.4 Aid and small-scale fisheries*

Given the role of small-scale fisheries in providing local food security and employment, as well as arguments on their relative environmental benefits in comparison to more commercialised fisheries, it is to be expected that foreign aid would comprise mostly of projects that have the small-scale sector as its focus. Apparently many Western donors began to pay more attention to the small-scale sector during the mid 1990s, when enthusiasm for building up industrial fisheries in Africa waned (Hersoug: 1998). However, it is extremely difficult to work out what proportion of ODA has small-scale fisheries as the primary beneficiaries now. It is probably more than it used to be, but certainly not all donors make small-scale fisheries a priority in their aid projects. In one commissioned review of the UK funded Partnership for Africa's fisheries the lack of consideration to how reforms proposed by this project would influence small-scale fisheries was noted as a point of criticism,<sup>7</sup> and a global review of funding for fisheries provided by Norway described that the majority of its projects were not explicitly concerned with development aims for small-scale producers either (NORAD: 2008). However, a difficulty in better understanding the importance given to small-scale fisheries by donors is that many fisheries projects will claim local fishing and access to better fishing grounds for artisanal fishers will be an outcome, even where the main purpose of the aid projects lie elsewhere. An important question is therefore whether donors are giving sufficient importance to small-scale fisheries in comparison to other issues that might have less obvious developmental impact?

Any argument for increased aid spending to small-scale fisheries needs to consider that past projects for small-scale fisheries have had an ambiguous outcome, and the main point of concern lies with the top-down nature of project development, which has not always led to projects that were successful or well received. Early efforts to help reform small-scale fisheries were often based on capacity building, with the ambition of increasing local knowledge on fish stocks and making fishers more efficient through upgrading fishing gear and boat building. Bryceson (1994) described this work in Tanzania, noting how European experts descended on fishing villages to teach them how to be

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<sup>7</sup> See third annual review of the International Partnership for African Fisheries, Governance and Trade, available at: <http://devtracker.dfid.gov.uk/projects/GB-1-200157/documents/>

better fishers, what he derided as a paternalistic effort resulting in not only inappropriate technology transfers, but also the criminalisation of some traditional fishing methods. Later on, in countries including Tanzania, donor projects have also tried to get fishers to diversify their income activities, through investing in small-scale agriculture and aquaculture. There is a shortage of evidence on how successful this policy has been, although some evidence to suggest it has benefited local fishers but also that it is hard to help fishers become farmers (Wells, Makoloweka & Samoilys: 2007). Yet perhaps the most ambitious donor funded reform in small-scale fisheries lies with community co-management. This came to the fore in the mid 1990s, and there are few countries in Africa where community co-management has not been attempted, and the development community instigated the trend.

We do not need to dwell on the literature that describes the outcome of donor funded community co-management. Yet problems have routinely surfaced showing that the expectations of community co-management were naïve, and the way in which it has been approached has not been empowering for many people (Béné, et al: 2008). Unwittingly, perhaps, these experiments in decentralisation have at times benefited local elites as opposed to fishers themselves and they have had a perverse impact on other systems of local governance, sometimes giving a new platform for unpopular customary authorities or undermining nascent forms of locally elected governments, which some argue are far more effective institutions to achieve democratic accountability than community based 'user groups' (Manor: 2004). Supporters of community co-management can point to success stories as well, so the subject is a contested one.

We need more analysis on the impact of specific development aid to fishing communities and the small-scale sector. But the salient point is that where development agencies have attempted to improve the lives of those engaged in this sector, the outcome has been uncertain, sometimes the net impact may have been negative. Whether various aid projects have aligned with what small-scale fishers want, as opposed to what foreign agencies and NGOs desire, such as increased rents or biodiversity conservation, is an important point to reflect on, and a matter that those critical of donor interventions for the small-scale sector have continuously raised (Overå: 2011).

As the proceeding analysis has shown, the impact of aid on small-scale fisheries goes beyond the dedicated aid projects to them. Policy choices and activities of donors are increasingly being challenged on the grounds that they work to the disadvantage of the small-scale sector. This is not only through the role donors have and continue to have in influencing industrial fisheries and access agreements, but points of contention have arisen with donor support to commercial aquaculture, eco-labelling, marine protected areas, and then most recently through debates on reforming property rights, including fears that donors are supporting the extension of ITQs through the emerging narrative of wealth-based reforms (Béné: 2011). The subject of how donors work to support or undermine small-scale fisheries becomes even more complex when we factor in donor policies outside fisheries, such as funding for off-shore and coastal mining, which is becoming an issue of concern for coastal people in many parts of Africa, and an area where considerable development assistance is provided. Problems of policy incoherence between extractive industries and small-scale fisheries and marine conservation abound.

#### **4. Democratic accountability in fisheries aid**

Although there are important debates on the theory of what aid should be doing, where it is needed the most and how it can be aligned with the needs of the most marginalised, including women and those engaged in the post harvest sectors, it should be acknowledged that existing aid to the fisheries sector is characterised by lack of information sharing, poor levels of participation and therefore quite limited accountability. The activities and impact of donors is largely obscured from public scrutiny or sanctions, both in home countries and the host countries where it is received.

These are not problems unique to fisheries. The need to improve transparency and accountability has become central to international efforts to reform aid since the late 1990s, which has culminated in the 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, the Accra Agenda for Action in 2008, and then the Bussan Partnership for Effective Development in 2011. There has been a tremendous growth in critical reflection and monitoring of donor's performance, showing some improvements, but

also discrepancy between rhetoric and reality (Easterly & Williamson: 2011). There has also been a deepening of discussions on what accountability means and how it can be achieved. The Paris Declaration for instance identified the importance of ‘national ownership’ of aid programmes, intended to insure governments of developing countries could choose what was important to fund and to cushion them from the practice of donors making aid conditional on other policies and activities. Criticisms of national ownership led to the inclusion of civil society as important stakeholders in the Busan Partnership declaration, and a more common reference now to ‘democratic ownership’, which means development programmes should ensure meaningful inclusion and empowerment of affected and vulnerable populations, not just government partners (Periera: 2011).

Accountability in aid therefore exists in different directions. A government agency receiving aid may be accountable to the donor, but not to other agencies or parts of government, nor to people. Experts on accountability talk about upward, downward and horizontal relationships. Meaningful accountability also requires both positive and negative sanctions to exist. In other words, for someone to be accountable to another, the other has to be able to influence their behaviour.

To simplify a discussion on accountability in fisheries aid, three aspects can be considered. The first lies with how aid projects are developed and the extent of participation and public scrutiny in the process. The second lies with how aid projects are evaluated and the extent to which this evaluation is reliable and allows for critical input. The final consideration is with the potential for fisheries aid to be subject to civil society oversight.

#### ***4.1 Accountability in the development of aid projects***

Many development programmes in fisheries are characterised by limited communication and therefore participation in the planning stage. In fact, for many of the projects found in the CFFA aid database is not clear that any project proposal or guiding framework is made publicly available, and very few donors establish an overall framework for their aid spending on fisheries. For Japan, the vast majority of their aid projects in fisheries are reported to the OECD without any further information or documentation. The situation for those not contributing to the OECD statistics on international development is worse. Information on Chinese and Russian investments and payments to host countries is extremely limited and what we do know is through anecdotal evidence and the occasional newspaper report based on official visits and government press releases. The situation is consistent with studies on overall transparency by donors, as measured by the Publish What You Fund campaign. Its index on donor transparency ranks many of the most important donors in the fisheries sector, including Japan, Spain and Norway, quite poorly.<sup>8</sup>

In this context it is uncertain the extent to which there is co-ordination between donors. European donors have established an informal working group among their fisheries advisors, but so far this has not produced anything substantial for public reading or input. There seems little that the main fisheries donors, including Japan, the African Development Bank Group, UN agencies and the World Bank, do to avoid duplication and improve coherence among their projects.

We have little insight into the role played by host governments in choosing how aid money in fisheries is used when the state is the primary implementing organisation. Despite years of development assistance, no African government has developed a transparent national strategy for fisheries reform that could act as a guide and point for public debate for determining how development assistance is used and what are the measures of success.

The process in which many aid projects are hatched, what is decided is the priority for countries and how projects should be designed is therefore somewhat murky. Donors and host governments are most likely operating through ad hoc and largely internal processes, based on the preferences of those that hold senior positions at that time or the influence of unelected and unaccountable organisations. NGOs in particular are source of this influence, and those that are better resourced and more proficient at writing proposals or meeting with donors get to influence where aid should go the most. Dauvergnon and Lebaron (2014) describe that this influence has become more pronounced with the

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<sup>8</sup> The index is available at [www.publishwhatyoufund.org](http://www.publishwhatyoufund.org)

corporatisation of INGOs over the past few decades, particularly those involved in environment and human rights, highlighting that many have moved towards prioritising projects that maximise their potential to sustain their growth and incomes. Misleading claims on the nature of problems feed into marketing campaigns for funding. The ability of such organisations to influence how aid is spent has grown while their connection with the rest of civil society in poorer countries has possibly weakened.

The situation is possibly countered by the move towards a partnership model in aid initiatives, something that has been pressed on donors in order to overcome lack of democratic ownership. But the partnership model has often fallen short of its underlying objective (Baaz: 2011). The way in which partnerships are formed tends to be arbitrary, with those setting them up and funding them deciding on who joins, and who does not. They struggle to achieve equality in power, allowing continued domination by those with greater resources and influence. Less powerful groups partner up in the hope to access funding, while those that choose not to risk being branded trouble makers, less likely to gain funding or invites to 'stakeholder meetings'. Partnerships can therefore become mechanisms of co-option and exclusion as opposed to fostering democratic representation (Fowler: 2008).

There are several examples of new partnerships in fisheries that exist to improve accountability in aid spending. In the early 2000s the EC rebranded its fisheries agreements as Fisheries Partnership Agreements, although only recently has the EC allowed for civil society in host countries to have any official role in negotiations, and it took considerable effort by NGOs, assisted by European parliamentarians, to make the scientific and economic evaluations of FPAs public documents. In 2009 the UK established the African Partnership for Fisheries that aims to create an African voice on fisheries reform. It has been successful in attracting further funding from the EU, although again its approach to transparency, success in achieving civil society participation and capturing diverse opinions on fisheries reform is debateable. The majority of its working groups, the main focus of activities and spending of funding, are run by experts and institutions from the UK.

A more promising initiative is the GPO, which has taken a more inclusive and transparent approach. It is the most ambitious attempt to bring together divergent interests to direct aid to fisheries and marine conservation, although whether it generates new funding, as opposed to re-organising existing commitments, is unclear. Members of the Blue Ribbon Panel that oversees the implementation of the GPO were selected among peers. But it has still been subject to the criticism that a small number of people have crafted the objectives of the GPO and smaller organisations wanting to be part of the initiative have to endorse the GPO's declaration, which is vague and makes reference to approaches to reform fisheries governance that are contentious. Small-scale fishers were not proactively engaged in the process of developing the purpose of the GPO, and they are not represented in the Blue Ribbon Panel either. This contains representatives of the oil industry, industrial fishing and fish trading companies, marine scientists and global environmental groups. There remains much to be done if the GPO is to overcome business as usual and insure decisions on aid disbursements are more democratically legitimate.

Lack of accountability, fictitious partnerships or consultations, are no doubt well understood within aid agencies, and a matter of concern for them. We need to appreciate that donors are often under tight deadlines to launch projects, and attempts to identify who are the best local representatives to work with may be extremely difficult, and they are confronted with few civil society organisations that have strong support bases and legitimacy within wider sections of the population. Government partner agencies are often neither in favour or particularly skilled at working with civil society organisations in their countries (Moore: 2011). New thinking about how donors can establish meaningful civic engagement in aid planning that is less vulnerable to domination is therefore urgently needed.

#### *4.2 Accountability in project implementation*

As part of its interest in assessing aid, the FAO commissioned a study into the assessment of aid projects in the fisheries sector (Macfadyen: 2008). This revealed that the quality of evaluations of aid projects tends to be poor; an important reason why ineffective, and potentially harmful aid practices are perpetuated. The World Bank publication on the political economy of aid to fisheries also noted

that the tendency for these evaluations to be nearly always positive begs the question about their credibility.

For many projects publicly available evaluations do not exist, and for several important donors in the CFFA database they do not publish any evaluations at all. Whether they and other donors conduct confidential evaluations is unknown and even the FAO's study found that requests to donors for information on evaluations went unanswered. Yet this means that very little public assessment is being done on the millions of dollars being spent on fisheries reform every year.

This lack of project evaluations and documentation is occurring with limited access to information on fisheries management by governments in Africa. As established in previous research by CFFA, in many African countries African governments and fisheries agencies do not publish annual reports, annual budgets and financial statements, while basic information on licenses and access agreements is similarly withheld from the public (Standing: 2012).

Where donors do undertake evaluations, which are sometimes done at a mid-point in project implementation and then at project completion, various factors work to undermine their quality. Where evaluations are done internally, that is by donor staff, there is a risk that projects are evaluated positively to influence careers and further funding. Evaluations, particularly at the mid-point, may be approached carefully knowing that negative observations may generate political tensions and threaten the remainder of the project's implementation (Wenar: 2006).

External evaluations are generally regarded as more reliable than internal ones, but they are also vulnerable to bias (Martens, et al: 2008, Wenar: 2006). Donors almost always choose who does the evaluation for their project, which is important given their interests in having a good one. Moreover, consultants being employed by donors may want to please them with a positive evaluation, therefore increasing the likelihood of repeat business (evaluations are lucrative jobs). There are also conflicts of interests, where evaluators can simultaneously be engaged in work with host government agencies. Such problems are amplified in fisheries because the pool of available fisheries experts is relatively small, so the same group of people tend to straddle multiple roles as advisors to donors, evaluators of donor projects and also implementers or recipients of development aid through NGOs or consulting firms, or both.

Some project evaluations are better than others, and evaluations remain good entry points for a wider discussion on aid effectiveness, so they need to be actively shared and made as accessible as possible, including being published in local languages, which typically they are not. Evaluations tend to be aimed at the donor, not the wider public, which demonstrates that accountability from the design of evaluations is not downward to recipients.

Further methodological limitations of evaluations, as well as time constraints, render these documents rather limited sources of information for understanding the impact of aid. Indeed, what is very rare are in depth evaluations that take a longer time frame. Evaluating a project just after it is completed provides a narrow understanding of its impact, which may be better understood several years after the project has ended.

Norway is one of the few examples where a donor has commissioned an evaluation of its aid programmes in fisheries, but the outcome was unconvincing (NORAD: 2008). Indeed, although the consultants were positive about Norway's funding in fisheries and urged for more funding to be made available, evidence of successful outcomes were scarce. In the case of Mozambique, where Norway has channelled most of its fisheries aid in Africa, the problem of overfishing, high levels of aid dependency and the collapse of the most important commercial fishery in the country was all described, but deemed insufficient to give a negative assessment because Norway's funding has helped build management capacity to better understand these problems. The extent to which Norway's aid has helped address food security or poverty was not considered because these were not included in any of the intended outputs for any of Norway's projects. Although the evaluation stated that it was informed by interviews with fishing communities in Mozambique, no data or insights from communities was included either. The findings of this report can be contrasted with others on development aid to the fisheries sector in Mozambique, which point to more troubling issues, including high level conflicts of interests and corruption (Buur, Baloi & Tembe: 2012).

### **4.3 Civil society oversight?**

Beyond commissioned evaluations, accountability in aid projects may be achieved in other ways. It may be hoped, for instance, that projects that fail or cause negative impacts will face criticism from NGOs or civil society, including fishers, journalists, academics and so forth. There are, of course, many examples of where popular protest has occurred surrounding aid projects and the activities of donors, and at times these have been successful. There are few examples related to fisheries, although there have been protests by small-scale fisheries against foreign fishing nations, such as those that occurred in Senegal in 2012 against the issuing of licenses to Russian and Chinese industrial fishing firms. Questions were asked on the nature of Russian aid to Senegal, although this remains largely unresolved. The situation, therefore, is that despite good reasons to examine fisheries aid projects, these are subject to very little national or international scrutiny.

This is understandable, if not acceptable. In undemocratic countries where freedom of speech is curtailed, the oversight function of civil society is considerably muted. Research by the NGO 'Reality of Aid' has documented that in many developing countries local critics of aid are silenced through various nefarious methods by governments, including imprisonment and harassment (Reality of Aid: 2012). Similarly, a significant barrier to oversight of aid projects is the reality that the vast majority of people working on fisheries in Africa, including those with insights into aid projects, are themselves aid dependent, unlikely to rock the boat.

## **5. Conclusion: The challenge of addressing accountability in development aid to the fisheries sector**

Billions of dollars in aid have been spent on fisheries in Africa, and it is possible that an increase in aid will be witnessed over the next few years, including through innovative methods of matching public funding with corporate 'socially responsible investments'. The impact of this spending is open to scrutiny – some argue it has been largely ineffectual, while there are reasons why aid may have a negative impact in some situations, including for small-scale fisheries that perhaps should be considered the priority for funding that is defined by its objective to improve human development. The way in which aid is delivered is also highly problematic, being characterised by a general lack of openness and accountability, and aid to the fisheries sector is not allowing democratic participation by those it is intended to help, including the small-scale sector and coastal communities.

Reforms to improve democratic accountability need to be explored further. Several ideas could help inform these discussions.

1] There needs to be more effort by those working on fisheries, including donors themselves, to address poor levels of transparency and access to information. There should be broad agreement that people affected by development aid have a right to know how this money is being spent, on what and by whom. There are international efforts, such as the Intentional Aid Transparency Initiative and the Publish What You Fund campaign that have established standards and are putting pressure on donors to conform. These standards are broad and not sector specific, and therefore more needs to be done to ensure aid projects in specific sectors such as fisheries are more open. The work of CFFA to establish a simple database on aid projects could be taken further, with more information compiled on these projects that is publically available and actively disseminated. This needs to be extended to include information on Non-DAC countries and the activities of UN agencies, philanthropic donors, corporate investors and NGOs. Emerging efforts to better co-ordinate donor efforts in the fisheries sector, such as that being attempted in Europe, could play a proactive role, by sharing information and putting pressure on others to do the same. Members of the GPO should also consider how they could collectively push reforms for transparency and democratic accountability among bi-lateral and multi-lateral donors, as well as with NGOs and philanthropic funders. This ought to be given serious attention to approving and reviewing any new projects that fall under the GPO initiative.

2] Much more effort should be given to establishing critical, independent research on the impact of aid to the fisheries sector. Donors face enormous challenges in demonstrating what the positive impacts

of their fisheries projects are. Project evaluations offer a limited, but necessary role in improving public understanding and potentially contributing to better accountability. The FAO's study on this contained good ideas for improving evaluations, including that donors find ways of distancing themselves from deciding on who does external evaluations and ensure that evaluators include those beyond fisheries experts (bringing in social and political scientists as well). More ambitious recommendations for reforming project evaluations of aid exist, including more rigorous peer reviews and the establishment of international association of evaluators (Wenar: 2006). Such ideas could be taken forward in the fisheries sector, helping to lift the process of aid evaluations out of the current approach which is ad hoc, methodologically weak and based on arbitrary terms of references. A good place to start is to look at which individuals and companies are used repeatedly for evaluations and to encourage collaboration and external input.

Beyond evaluations, the subject of aid in fisheries is not well studied. More academic and independent studies are sparse. There is a potential role here for independent research institutes to do more in terms of scrutinising the role of aid on the political economy of fisheries, highlighting what its impact is on democracy, the livelihoods of small-scale fisheries and on the competitive world of industrial fisheries and fish trade. In doing so, there is a need and opportunity to ensure more local organisations and people are part of a review of aid to their fisheries sector, which could include journalists and members of fishers and fish processing organisations. Joint research projects by experienced research institutes and local organisations could be a positive approach, and would have more chance of gaining a local audience, as well as testing real experiences of people in countries in gaining access to information.

3] There is a need to take more seriously the lack of democratic ownership of aid in the fisheries sector. Part of the challenge lies with getting host governments and donors to develop framework documents, or even simply national debates, that can act as a guide for fisheries aid projects, including clear objectives and measures of success. The current approach is disorganised and vulnerable to the whims of decision makers, probably influenced by many who have no legitimate claim to speak on behalf of citizens in these countries.

For the most part, citizens have very little say on development assistance in their countries. NGO consultations and the emergence of more formal 'partnerships' are inadequate for ensuring democratic accountability. The problem is not simply with donor agencies, for they are faced with enormous difficulties in countries to locate legitimate and effective civil society organisations.

Since the Accra Agenda in 2008 there have been efforts to better integrate civil society into the process of aid planning. Aid advisory groups have been established by some donors, which combine CSOs, government representatives and donors. These have working groups on different sectors, but none on fisheries. Extending the work of these groups to include fisheries or coastal environment is an option. However research on aid advisory groups reveals that in many places governments often decide which CSOs can participate, CSOs tend to be given very little time to prepare for meetings, and important decisions are taken outside of these groups by government representatives and donors (Reality of Aid: 2012). The familiar problems with 'partnerships' are evident in these arrangements.

There needs to be consideration to other approaches. An attractive model would be based on the civic assembly concept, where willing participants are selected by lot and paid a modest stipend for their work. Such assemblies are supported by external experts, but in ways that limit their ability to capture decision-making processes. This model would ensure gender parity and avoid the pitfalls of professional NGOs speaking on behalf of others. Civic assemblies are not intended to replace governments, and their outcomes should not be presented as non-negotiable demands, but rather they should act as a complimentary body to support decision making by elected authorities. Several organisations are helping establish civic assemblies around the world and piloting this approach in fisheries remains an interesting proposition. We should not expect or wait for governments or donors to take the lead in these experiments, and much could be done by civil society organisations to set up these type of bodies independently, which can then be referred to donors and governments when they

are faced with the task of inviting participants to attend meetings and participate in decision making processes.

Thinking about alternative mechanisms for civic engagement in fisheries raises difficult questions, which need to be further discussed. Most importantly who are the valid 'stakeholders' who should have a voice in fisheries aid and policy planning? Is this restricted to people engaged in the sector of fishing and fish processing? What about people involved in coastal tourism, conservation and so on? This is an important consideration for thinking more seriously about deepening democratic accountability; accountability to and by whom? Here we cannot resolve these questions, but our intention is to urge people to acknowledge the limitations of existing approaches to participation in development aid, even though for many donors interest in this seems fairly low, or actively discouraged.

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